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HOUSE BILL NO. 485

Offered January 14, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Chapter 26 of Title 2.2 an article numbered 16.1, consisting of sections numbered 2.2-2649.1 through 2.2-2649.4, relating to Children's Cabinet established; report.

Patron—Shin

Referred to Committee on Rules

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in Chapter 26 of Title 2.2 an article numbered 16.1, consisting of sections numbered 2.2-2649.1 through 2.2-2649.4, as follows:

Article 16.1.

Children's Cabinet.

§ 2.2-2649.1. Children's Cabinet; purpose.

The Children's Cabinet (the Cabinet) is established as an advisory council, within the meaning of § 2.2-2100, in the executive branch of state government. The purpose of the Cabinet is to advise the Governor on matters pertaining to children in the Commonwealth and ways to improve their health, safety, and well-being.

§ 2.2-2649.2. Membership; quorum; meetings.

A. The Cabinet shall consist of the Chief of Staff for the Governor or his designee, the Secretaries of the Commonwealth, Agriculture and Forestry, Commerce and Trade, Education, Health and Human Resources, and Public Safety and Homeland Security or their designees, and the Children's Ombudsman. All members of the Cabinet shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office.

B. The Chief of Staff for the Governor or his designee shall serve as chair and may invite other Governor's Secretaries and agency heads to participate as needed and as appropriate to improve and coordinate systems and services for children provided by state and local agencies. The Cabinet shall elect a vice-chair from among its membership. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. The Cabinet shall meet a minimum of four times each year. The meetings of the Cabinet shall be held at the call of the chair or whenever the majority of the members so request.

C. Members of the Cabinet shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in § 2.2-2825.

§ 2.2-2649.3. Powers and duties of the Cabinet; report.

The Cabinet shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Encourage agencies of the Commonwealth to collaborate across governmental and nongovernmental entities to align and develop policies, programs, and resources to improve outcomes for children and their families, particularly those at high risk of negative outcomes, and to develop specific goals, identify and facilitate the implementation of strategies, and measure impacts and outcomes related to the following priorities:

a. Early childhood development and school readiness, including promoting healthy pregnancies and social supports for new mothers and families during the first years of a child's life and ensuring the availability of affordable, accessible, high-quality early childhood education in all areas of the Commonwealth;

b. Nutrition and food security, including expanding access to nutritious food and decreasing food insecurity for pregnant women and children and promoting community-based food systems to increase access to healthy, local foods; and

c. Student safety for school-age children;

2. Encourage agencies of the Commonwealth to prioritize systems of care for the safety and well-being of children and the stability of families, including the needs of children and families arising from trauma, abuse, or neglect, and mental or behavioral health challenges; and

3. Submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports. The chair of the Cabinet shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual executive summary of the interim activity and work of the Cabinet no later than the first day of each regular session of the General Assembly. The executive summary shall be submitted for publication as a report document as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website

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§ 2.2-2649.4. Staffing.

Staff support shall be provided to the Cabinet by the offices of the Governor, the Secretaries represented in the Cabinet, and the Children's Ombudsman. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Cabinet, upon request.